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LEBANON: PROSPECTS FOR UNIFICATION

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INTRODUCTION

The cost of U.S. presence in Lebanon has been so shockingly raised following the tragic massacre of the Marines in Beirut that a renewed public debate about the various aspects of the Lebanon crisis and U.S. policy options in that country seems in order. This paper is consciously framed to address the dynamics of political forces *inside* Lebanon, as opposed to the wider regional and international dimensions of the crisis.[1]

Throughout its modern history, Lebanon's domestic politics have been inextricably tangled with conflicting regional and international interests and this reality has made the tiny Mediterranean republic a natural candidate for foreign intervention and a persistent source of regional instability. Conscious of this phenomenon, the Lebanese have always blamed others for their problems, and by the same token, depended on foreigners for solutions. While the omnipotence ascribed to foreign actors may not be entirely false, it is Lebanon's unique domestic political dynamics that deprive its body politic of basic mechanisms for internal tranquility, and which, in turn, invite foreign intervention. Through perception of local forces, these dynamics also *affect* the choices of the foreign parties as they weigh the balance of risks involved in arriving at potential policies.

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[1] A revised version of this paper will appear in the January 1984 issue of *Current History: A World Affairs Journal*.

LEBANON: PROSPECTS FOR UNIFICATION

After stunning the world in the past summer by its length and ferociousness, a cease-fire on September 25 succeeded in putting a stop, at least temporarily, to the otherwise inconclusive hostilities between Christian forces and Druze militias in the Shuf mountains of Lebanon. Now Lebanon's feuding factions and their foreign sponsors face the far more difficult task of reconciliation.

On the surface of things, Lebanon's central government of Amin Gemayel and that battered country's homegrown armies have willingly entered negotiations that would ultimately try to work out a new basis for resolving the tiny republic's critical problems. The new urgency attached to reconciliation efforts is prompted by several factors. In the first place, Lebanon's politicians and warlords seem to realize that the stark alternative to a "political dialogue" among them may well be permanent lawlessness or civil war and the consequent demise of the last vestiges of Lebanon sovereignty--a situation in which the political future of none of them can be certain. Having lived through nearly a decade of internecine warfare, lawlessness, insurrection, massacres and invasions, Lebanon's leaders (and the public) have also become acutely aware that cease-fires in their country have a way of breaking down as soon as prospects for peace grow brighter.[1] Hence the imperative for a "political dialogue" before unforeseen events blow up Lebanon's political powder keg--yet again.

The current search for a peaceful solution also reflects a reversal of emphasis by the Beirut government and the United States from their previous attempts to give priority to resolving Lebanon's disputes with its Syrian and Israeli neighbors. Over the past year, joint efforts at domestic reconciliation took a back seat to attempts to get Syrian and Israeli troops out of Lebanon. But with the failure of these efforts and the painful realization that questions of foreign occupation will

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[1] The September 25 cease-fire is by some accounts the 179th in Lebanon in the past 10 years. Looking at it differently, it means that 178 pervious cease-fires have collapsed.

not be resolved in the near future, both the Lebanese government and its American friends recognized the urgent need to pull Lebanon together internally.

What next? Will reconciliation pressures generated after the destruction of the Shuf and all the momentous developments of the past year prove strong enough in inducing Lebanon's leaders to forge a lasting national consensus and thus prevent the eventual dissolution of the Lebanese state? This is what the Lebanese are now asking in the midst of a no-war, no-peace situation that looks more and more like a quagmire.

A meaningful forecasting of future events in Lebanon is like trying to grasp mercury: it is both pretentious and foolish when understanding of the underlying causes of Lebanon's political malaise and of its ills has eluded the grasp of many Lebanese and well-intentioned foreign observers for years.

While many attribute Lebanon's internal problems to others--Israelis, Syrians and Palestinians--few would deny the basic reality that no external power can resolve the problems of sociopolitical fragmentation and communal identity that have haunted Lebanon throughout its modern history. Thus, for an understanding of the current situation in Lebanon it is imperative to recognize that as in most Middle Eastern affairs, the hand of the past is inescapably stamped on the present.

The Factional Heritage

In Lebanon the most important fact of human geography is the diversity of religious sects or confessional groups.[2] Conflict among them and between different factions within a particular sect have been acrimonious for many centuries. In time, they preserved and strengthened a deep sense of factional identity whereby religious cleavages gradually acquired communal colorings and contributed to the emergence of many distinct and often antagonistic Christian and Muslim groups.

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[2] Relatively recent studies of the Lebanese sects, include Halim Barakat, "Social and Political Integration in Lebanon: A Case of Social Mosaic," *Middle East Journal*, Summer 1973, pp. 301-318; and Joseph Chamie, "Religious Groups in Lebanon: A Descriptive Investigation," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 1980, No. 2, pp. 175-187.

The significant role the European powers played throughout the nineteenth century, seeking their own ends by intervening frequently in the political life of the country, further exacerbated relations among Lebanon's factional groups. European influence also contributed to the emergence of differing political outlooks and objectives among the diverse communities.[3]

We find the most striking example of this in the protection by France of the Maronites. This Catholic community--still the largest and the most powerful among Lebanon's Christians--had moved into Lebanon in the seventh century and defended its new home successfully in the following centuries. Traditionally viewing themselves as an outpost of Christian civilization in the otherwise Muslim Middle East, the Maronites aligned and identified themselves with the West, particularly with France. This Catholic power, in turn, cemented its political ties by promoting Maronite interests in the area.

France's protective relationships also extended to Lebanon's third largest Christian group--the Melchite or the Greek Catholic community. This traditionally well-educated and urban group was originally a part of the Eastern Orthodoxy but had entered into communion with the Papacy in the early eighteenth century. In political matters, the Melchites concurred with the Maronites (they continue to do so to this date) and maintained special ties with France, but the bonds were not as strong.

In an attempt to counterbalance French influence over the Maronites, the British assiduously cultivated the closely-knit and post-Islamic Druze community. Like the Maronites, this warlike sect had developed its own factional identity since the eleventh century when its members embraced their present faith. Anglo-French colonial rivalries in the region, in turn, exacerbated the already antagonistic relations between the Druze and the Maronites and helped to provoke wide-spread civil strife between the two groups that periodically plagued Lebanon in the nineteenth century.

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[3] Studies of Europe's role in modern history of Lebanon include John P. Spagnolo, *France and Ottoman Lebanon, 1861-1914* (London: Ithaca Press, 1977); Philip K. Hitti,. *Lebanon in History* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1957); and Kamal S. Salibi, *The Modern History of Lebanon* (New York: Praeger, 1965).

France and England were not alone in their eagerness to intrigue in
Lebanon. Competing with these for influence was also Tsarist Russia.
who established protective ties with the Greek Orthodox community--
the second largest Christian group in Lebanon.[4] The Austrians, in the
meantime, competed with the French in winning the sympathy of the Greek,
Syrian, and Armenian Catholics. The Americans, who had a more benign
role in Lebanon than the Europeans, looked after the Protestants.

The Orthodox Muslims or the Sunnis, the dominant group in the
coastal areas of Lebanon since the fourteenth century, tended to enjoy
their status as adherents to the state religion of the Ottoman
Sultanate, and maintained close ties with their Sunni co-religionists in
Syria and elsewhere in the region. Among Lebanon's major confessional
groups the Shi'i Muslims provided the sole exception to the above
tradition. Long persecuted by their Sunni Muslim rulers, the members of
this community neither sought nor welcomed ties with foreign powers,
whether Christian or Muslim. Thus, the various confessional groups who
were destined to make up the Lebanese mosaic in the twentieth century
reached the modern age as discordant entities with conflicting values
and political orientation. And as in the past, their confessional
identity continued to serve them as the primary basis of collective
identification and the principal axis of political behavior.

The Mandate Legacy

Many of Lebanon's current problems can be traced back to 1920 when
France created the State of Greater Lebanon and came to administer it
under the League of Nations mandate.[5] The boundaries of the new state
(which coincide with those of today) differed considerably from those of
earlier times. France's decision almost doubled Lebanon's territory to
4,000 square miles and increased its population by one-half--from

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[4] For a discussion of this topic, see Derek Hopwood, *Russian
Presence in Syria and Palestine, 1843-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,
1969).

[5] The political intricacies of the time that led to the
establishment of Greater Lebanon are best discussed in Spagnolo, ibid.,
and Jan Karl Tanenbaum, *France and the Middle East, 1914-1920*
(Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1978).

400,000 to 600,000. But what the country gained in area, it lost in cohesion. Thus to Mount Lebanon, the traditional home of the Maronites and the Druze, were added the Bekka valley with a Shi'i majority and a large plurality of Greek Catholics, the coastal towns where the Sunnis and the Greek Orthodox predominated, the southern region inhabited by the Shi'is, and the northern region where the Sunnis formed the majority population. Thus Lebanon lost its internal equilibrium though geographically and economically it became more viable. The new state was preeminently a country of minorities where no one community, including the Maronites, formed more than 30 percent of the total population.

Despite this shortcoming, the Maronites, who had in effect been rewarded for their faithful allegiance to France, enthusiastically welcomed the new arrangement. Most Sunni Muslims, on the other hand, favored the idea of an Arab nation and an Arab Syrian state. Fearing permanent separation from other parts of the Muslim Arab world, the Sunnis opposed their inclusion in Lebanon. Instead, they preferred annexing Lebanon to the newly created Syrian state where their Sunni coreligionists formed the majority population.

As for the Greek Catholics and the newly-arrived Christian Armenians, they concurred with the Maronites.[6] In contrast, the Greek Orthodox were much less sure of their stand, while many of their intellectuals supported the pan-Arab orientation of the Sunnis. The Druze and the Shi'is tended to share the ambivalence of the Orthodox Christians, but were not entirely unhappy with the creation of Greater Lebanon.

Under the mandate, the French held the key to the nature of relations among Lebanon's diverse communities; and as France's policy changed, the relationship among the communities changed.[7] The refusal of

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[6] At present, Armenians constitute the fourth largest Christian community in Lebanon. The ethnically non-Arab Armenians are the survivors of Armenian massacres at the hands of successive Turkish governments before, during, and after World War I. They arrived in Lebanon en masse in the early 1920s.

[7] Lebanon's confessional politics in the mandate period are carefully discussed by Stephen H. Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon Under French Mandate* (New York: Octagon Books, 1972).

large numbers of individuals within each group, especially among the Sunnis, to submit themselves to the Maronite-dominated "national" authority in Beirut, significantly inhibited national integration and strained the country's political system. The French, meanwhile, did little to foster loyalty to the Lebanese entity, and territorial national consciousness remained beyond the comprehension of Lebanon's inhabitants.

Paradoxically, as the movement toward independence grew during World War II, Lebanon still remained a hodgepodge of confessional groups with persisting communal divisions or supernational loyalties. This situation contained the seeds of a wide-spread factional conflict which might have been no less tragic than that of 1860 when thousands of civilian Lebanese were massacred in intercommunal violence. The conflict, however, did not break out, and when the French left the country in 1946, there came into being an independent Lebanon with a government that satisfied most Lebanese factions.

The National Pact

How did this happen? The answer lay in the ingenious yet flawed formula of the National Pact by which Lebanon's communities arrived at a basis for national and interconfessional cooperation. Contrary to its name, the National Pact was not a written document but rather a verbal agreement between the traditional elites of the two major sects: the Maronites and the Sunnis. According to its unwritten terms the Christians, especially the Maronites, agreed to forego dependence on France as their protector and accepted the Arab character of Lebanon which would cooperate with all the Arab states but not take sides in Arab disputes. Similarly, the Muslims agreed to recognize Lebanon as a fully independent state, and cease aspiring for a merger with other Arab states, particularly Syria. The agreement also stipulated that all the political and administrative offices within the structure of the state would be proportionally distributed among the recognized confessional groups. In keeping with the spirit of this reconciliation, the interests of the remaining major religious groups were also taken into account. Thus, Lebanon's President was always to be a Maronite, the

Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, and the president of the Chamber of
Deputies a Shi'i. Key ministries were also reserved for particular
religious groups: the Foreign Minister was always to be a Christian and
usually a Maronite, the Defense Minister a Druze, and so on. In a
similar fashion, the Christians also were believed at the time to number
slightly more than the Muslims, received a slightly larger
representation in the parliament: six Christians for every five non-
Christians.

Remarkable as these agreements were, the National Pact signified a
confirmation, rather than an abandonment, of the tradition of dividing
political offices among the factional elites. Thus, this balancing act
was not only inevitably unstable because it established a government
based largely on a spoils system, but because it effectively forced many
of the society's future economic, social and political struggles to take
place within the narrow boundaries of the confessional framework.[8] The
result was that whereas the Pact guaranteed the physical survival of an
independent Lebanese entity, yet it added to the confusion of national
identity among its inhabitants. Despite its flaws, this system
functioned remarkably well. It made possible an environment in which
Lebanon, alone in the Arab world, could tolerate diverse political
parties, conduct regular elections, enjoy an unrestricted press, and
make a successful market economy work.

By 1958, however, Lebanese politics were once again unravelling;
and a major challenge to the National Pact arrangements erupted in the
form of a civil war.[9] The factional polarization in Lebanon was partly
because of economic disparity between the Christians and Muslims and the
growing Muslim population that threatened the supremacy of the
Christians. More significantly, perhaps, the crisis was also a response
to Egyptian President Nasser's militant pan-Arabist crusade. As a
result of his inflammatory urging, the monarchical regime in Iraq had
been overthrown, and Jordan's King Hussein was saved only with the help

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[8] Malcolm H. Kerr, "Political Decisionmaking in a Confessional
Democracy," in Leonard Binder (ed.), *Politics in Lebanon* (New York:
John Wiley, 1966), pp. 187-213.

[9] For an objective discussion of 1958 events, consult Fahim I.
Qubain, *Crisis in Lebanon* (Washington, D.C.: Middle East Institute,
1961).

of the British forces. In Lebanon, many Muslims, especially Sunnis, influenced by Nasser's pan-Arabism, opposed the Maronite President Sha'mun's efforts to create a modernized political organization that would undermine the traditional factional leaders. And when Sha'mun sought reelection for a second term, a combination of Sunnis, some Shi'is and a Christian group headed by Suleiman Franjiyeh (who later became president of Lebanon) took up arms against the government. Meanwhile, the Lebanese Army, fearing its own breakdown along factional lines, preferred to remain neutral. During the ensuing civil war the reigning president was forced to step aside in favor of Fuad Shehab, a Maronite general, who was more willing to meet Muslim demands for a larger share of economic and political power. The confessional structure and the Christians' overall political supremacy were also saved by the intervention of U.S. Marines who landed in Beirut on July 15.

The 1958 War left a mixed legacy in Lebanon. Resenting the growing militancy of the Muslim population, some Maronites together with many other Christians began to look toward Israel as a future ally. The Muslims, on the other hand, became more assertive and consolidated their ties with the neighboring Arab states. Moreover, by leaving the confessional balance of power essentially intact, the 1958 Civil War reaffirmed the inability of Lebanon's political system to adapt to shifting power relations among the major factional groups.

By the late 1960s, a more radicalized generation of mostly Muslim but also Christian leaders emerged on the political scene. Challenging positions of their respective leaders, these leftist forces worked outside the political system, and called for the fundamental redistribution of economic and political power. This new phenomenon further undermined the legitimacy of central government and strained the already precarious sectarian balance.[10]

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[10] The most substantial studies of Lebanese politics before the 1975-1976 civil strife include Michael C. Hudson, *Precarious Republic: Modernization in Lebanon* (New York: Random House, 1968); Kamal S. Salibi, *Crossroads to Civil War: Lebanon, 1958-1976* (New York: Caravan Books, 1976); and Politics in Lebanon, op. cit.

The Palestinian Catalyst

More important, it was the entrance of armed Palestinian Arabs into Lebanon that provided the catalyst which escalated the violence and brought the country to the edge of destruction.[11] Although the majority of Palestinian refugees had lived in Lebanon since the late 1940s, they became a potent political force only after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. But when Palestinian guerrillas began raiding Israeli settlements from Lebanese territory, the Beirut government could neither stop these attacks, nor prevent Israel's frequent retaliations. In 1970-1971 armed Palestinian groups were expelled from Jordan and moved en masse to Lebanon. Much to the dismay of Christians, the growth in Palestinian activity deepened the involvement in Lebanon's domestic affairs of various Arab countries which sponsored some of these guerrillas.

As young Palestinians rushed to join guerrilla organizations in the early 1970s, Lebanese attempts to curb the PLO were prevented by Syrian objections. This led to an arrangement in 1973 by which the PLO was allowed a greater freedom of action in Lebanon. The Sunnis and various leftist groups, believing that an anti-Zionist Lebanon would strengthen their ties with the neighboring Arab states, generally supported the PLO's use of Lebanon as its prime base of operations against Israel. On the other hand, Christians, along with many Shi'is were unwilling to suffer Israeli retaliations for Palestinian attacks.[12] The Christians, particularly the Maronites, also considered the fast-growing Palestinian community as a threat to their own continued political and economic supremacy.

Meanwhile, the guerrillas defying the weak Beirut government gradually began acting as a state within a state in Lebanon. They expanded their control over large areas of Lebanon (including parts of Beirut, the Bekka valley, and the South), and began openly supporting and training some of the radical Lebanese Muslim forces. These

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[11] Iliya Harik, *Lebanon: Anatomy of a Conflict* (American University Field Staff Reports, Asia Series, No. 49, 1981).

[12] By the mid-1970s, Israeli retaliation against the PLO attacks had devastated large areas in South Lebanon and caused the Imigration of some 350,000 desperate Shi'is to the southern suburbs of Beirut.

activities further exacerbated the factional feuds and galvanized the opposing militias to action. In 1975 the attempted assassination of Pierre Gemayel, the leader of the Phalangist party and militia, led to retaliation against the PLO and to a full-scale civil war. Before it was over 60,000 people were killed and many more thousands left homeless.[13]

The Continuing Anarchy

The civil war precipitated a political and geographic split reminiscent of the ragged patchwork of the pre-1920 period. In the first place, the war resulted in the near collapse of state authority. The political paralysis of the Lebanese government and the destruction of its army contributed to continuation of the anarchic domestic situation. As the government in Beirut ceased to exercise meaningful territorial control, Lebanon became a battleground for its much stronger Israeli and Syrian neighbors and their factional proxies.

Syria claimed that the Bekka valley was vital to its security, and Israel made similar assertions about South Lebanon. Not surprisingly, these claims found some support among the warring Lebanese factions. Beirut became divided into Christian and Muslim zones. The Maronites set up an autonomous rule over a small area in Mount Lebanon and controlled the coastal strip to the north of Beirut. Further to the north was the stronghold of the Sunni Muslims backed by Syria. Meanwhile, substantial parts of the country remained under the domination of Syria, which in the guise of an Arab League peace-keeping force had entered Lebanon in June 1976. The dismemberment of Lebanon continued in March 1978 when Israel invaded South Lebanon. This prompted Israel's quixotic ally, ex-major Haddad, to declare the independence of a "Free Lebanon" in the Shi'i-populated areas along the Israeli border.

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[13] A useful coverage of the Lebanese civil war is provided by Walid Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon: Confrontation in the Middle East* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Center for International Affairs, 1979); also consult Marius Deeb, *The Lebanese Civil War* (New York, Praeger, 1980); and Salibi's *Crossroads*, op. cit.

The domestic chaos continued unabated after 1978, and further violence between and within different combinations of factional groups destroyed much of Lebanon's economic infrastructure in the process. Israel's second invasion of Lebanon in the summer of 1982 appeared to give that country a chance to break out of this vicious circle. Exacting a heavy toll of human lives, the Israelis succeeded in destroying the Palestinian armed presence in South Lebanon and Beirut. But once Israel achieved its declared objective--the destruction of the PLO--it refused to leave Lebanese territory. Instead, Israel made the withdrawal of its forces conditional on a similar move by Syria. In the process, and like the Syrians before them, the Israelis came to stay in large chunks of Lebanon, effectively vaporizing their initial welcome among the largely Muslim population that continues to live under their control.

Unification Prospects

To be sure, much has changed in Lebanon in the past 12 months: for the first time since 1975 the Lebanese capital became reunited under the effective control of the Gemayel government; a newly-constructed mixed Christian-Muslim Lebanese army of some 35,000 loyal troops finally reappeared on the political-military scene; and the U.S. Marines (along with French, Italian, and British troops) successfully shielded the still frail regime in Beirut from the combination of Muslim/Druze/Leftist forces. The reversion of Lebanon back to the darkest days of pre-June 1982 has so far been forestalled.

Unfortunately, the Lebanon of late 1983 still suffers from the plethora of problems which make the survival of that country anything but certain. At present, Lebanon faces three main challenges. The first is how to effect the withdrawal of foreign occupation troops that have made a mockery of Lebanese sovereignty. Admittedly, this is a problem which no Lebanese government can solve on its own. Clearly, the Lebanese army cannot be expected to handle the Syrians or the Israelis. It needs at least five more years before it can maintain a minimal degree of internal law and order. Although there are reasons to assert that effective international pressure might after all succeed in

compelling foreign forces to leave Lebanon, a number of factors dim this prospect for the foreseeable future.

For one, Syria's physical presence in Lebanon increases its political leverage in the country and enables Damascus to press claims to Lebanese territory. Occupation also enhances Syria's influence over the Palestinians and buttresses its position in inter-Arab disputes. As for the Israelis, they have little to gain in extending their stay in Lebanon. But unless heavy U.S. pressure--with dubious results--is exerted on it, the Jewish state will not withdraw its forces before it can set up a permanent "security zone" in South Lebanon where it would prefer to keep the political, military, and economic reigns in its own hands. This objective, however, might take many years to succeed. Similarly, the Palestinians have nothing to gain but everything to lose if they withdraw from Lebanon. After all, the dispersal of the PLO forces to distant Arab countries far from Israeli borders has remained their basic nightmare in the past 18 months. Lastly, contrary to its public assertions, even the Gemayel government may not be entirely unhappy with the current situation. It recognizes only too well that if foreign troops are forced to withdraw swiftly, factional warlords will take over in their place, not the weak Lebanese army. Thus, it would probably prefer to face continued occupation than once again be left in the lurch.

The second basic obstacle to Lebanese sovereignty and domestic tranquillity is the continued existence of regional warlords and their local militias. Disregarding the regular Syrian and Israeli forces, there are literally thousands of well-armed militias roaming throughout the country; and a dozen or more factional warlords still dominate their fiefdoms. A good example of such leaders is Walid Jumblat, the 35-year-old head of a prominent Druze clan and the leader of the Progressive Socialist Party (and its militia), which was founded in 1948 by his father, Kamal Jumblatt. Holding this hereditary-socialist position, Walid Jumblat controls parts of the Shuf mountains and leads its Druze population. Similarly, Suleiman Franjiyeh, Lebanon's former President, dominates northern areas of Mount Lebanon from his stronghold of Zgharta; Pierre Gemayel, the leader of the Maronite Phalangist party and the father of Lebanon's current President, controls the Metn and

Kasrawan districts from his hometown of Bikfaya; Rashid Karami, a former
Prime Minister, leads the Sunni population in the northern city of
Tripoli, while Saeb Salam, again a former Prime Minister, performs the
same function in parts of West Beirut. This is also the case with the
Shi'i Hamadeh family in Ba'albak, the Maronite Eddes in Biblus, the
As'ads in the southeastern Bekka, and so forth.

What explains the preponderance of these centrifugal forces? To be
sure, the destruction of most political, military, and administrative
organs of the Lebanese state during the past years of civil strife has
obviously strengthened the hands of various warlords. Yet it must be
recognized that these forces do not present a novel phenomenon in
Lebanon. Political power in Lebanon has always rested with large land-
owning clans and families whose typical representatives are today's
warlords.[14] Despite blows dealt to feudal relations, especially in the
1960s, the country's confessional social structure provides ample
opportunity for these leaders to strengthen their position by
interspersing themselves in all governmental organs. These men also
perpetrate the traditional involvement of foreign powers in Lebanon's
political life; they generally cooperate with anybody, whether Lebanese
or not, to the extent necessary to preserve or enhance their power in
their fiefdoms. At the same time, these warlords derive much vitality
from the fact that their sectarian followers generally tend to support
them irrespective of their political stands. In return, these leaders
(not the government) provide security and the basic services.

As for the more "modernized" militia organizations such as the
Sunni Murabitun or the Shi'i Amal, they no longer derive power from the
family ties of their leaders but from their ability to mobilize street
fighters on short notice. Spanning the political and confessional
spectrum, these paramilitary groups are led by younger and more
radicalized men who have emerged during the civil strife of the recent
years by challenging the traditional leaders. However, like these men,

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[14] Studies of Lebanon's traditional ruling elites can be found in
Hrair R. DeKmejian, *Patterns of Political Leadership: Egypt, Israel,
Lebanon*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1974), pp. 11-62;
and Iliya Harik, "Political Elite of Lebanon," in George Lenczowski
(ed.) *Political Elites in the Middle East* (Washington, D.C.: American
Enterprise Institute, 1975), pp. 201-220; Arnold Hottinger, "Zuama in
Historical Perspective," in *Politics in Lebanon*, op. cit., pp. 85-105.

they too look to foreign sources for financial and political support.
In this process, they tend to reinforce the traditional involvement of
outside powers in internal Lebanese affairs.

Here again, the Lebanese government is nearly powerless to act. As
the bloody Shuf conflict last September demonstrated, the Gemayel
Administration still needs a much stronger military muscle to defeat and
disarm all the various factional militias and warlords and impose an end
to the lawlessness. More important, the present government in Beirut is
still far from being recognized as the repository of "national"
legitimacy. In a country where territorial nationalism remains an
esoteric concept, and where national appeal can not generate a strong
popular willingness to make sacrifices necessary for attaining
independence and sovereignty, little can be expected from a government.
In sum, the various centrifugal forces in Lebanon are direct vestiges of
that country's historical experience. As such, they are neither likely
to "wither away" under the impact of modernization, nor be destroyed by
governmental decisionmaking.

Finally, the more serious challenge of how to reknit a torn
society. It has been argued that reconstruction of Lebanon's military
and political organs is the key to that country's recovery. This may be
true in as much as efforts concentrate on extending the central
government's rule beyond the rabble-strewn suburbs of Beirut. But
Lebanon's recovery requires much more than rebuilding workable state
structures or hammering out a new and a more viable national pact.
First, Lebanese identity exists, but not as significantly as being
Maronite, Druze, Shi'i, Sunni, or Armenian. This reality enormously
complicates the task of arriving at a national consensus which is
crucial for the viability of a nation-state.

Perhaps equally important is the realization that what we have
witnessed in Lebanon in a decade of civil strife is not only the extreme
fragmentation of that country's political order, but the dissolution of
its society. Indeed, as a keen Lebanese observer has noted, the most
basic norms of social interaction that tie a society together--personal
confidence, decency, loyalty, and compassion--have been largely and
perhaps fatally eroded.[15] As Lebanon's modern history demonstrates, self-

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[15] Samir Khalaf, "On the Demoralization of Public Life in Lebanon:

centered factional groups can somehow be forced to continue living together, and pacts, contracts, or agreements can create new state organs; but how can human beings reconstruct a society?

As noted earlier, to predict Lebanon's future would be a feckless exercise, but one might speculate on some possibilities. First, it can be partitioned along existing confessional lines and turned into two or more separate but unviable ministates. This model would have serious political implications for the region. It would mean the formal acceptance of sectarianism as a basis for state structures in the Arab world. And this could be carried in time to every Arab state and thus destroy the present state system in the region. At present, this is an unlikely outcome. Formal dismemberment of Lebanon and its eventual annexation by Syria and Israel is another possibility, although this is not the stated policy of Lebanon's neighbors. Far from reducing it, this option would sharpen tensions between Syria and Israel by pitting their forces against each other in a more dangerous position than now. This option would further complicate superpower relations in the region and defeat the U.S. peace efforts in the Middle East.

Lastly, a federal Lebanon can be pieced together. This would be a country where a central government and an army could eventually reemerge. But it would still be divided into a multiplicity of territorially-based confessional groups. The factions may pay lip service to the federal government, but they would continue to live on their own. Finally, Lebanon would enjoy only limited sovereignty, and its policies would continue to require the consensus or sanction of its two more powerful neighbors. But that is probably all that can be expected in the near future.

At this writing, Lebanon's politicians and warlords, aware of new opportunities created by U.S. involvement, are cautiously examining the prospects for these alternatives. The recognition that the United States is perhaps the only power capable of brokering an agreement among the various Lebanese and non-Lebanese parties has once again rallied hopes for a peaceful resolution of the Lebanese crisis. Nonetheless,

Some Impassioned Reflections," *Studies on Comparative International Development*, Spring 1982, pp. 50-51.

challenges remain herculean, and the leviathan of factional strifes
stands ready to return.

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